

JOLIET JUNIOR COLLEGE

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

MR. & MRS. GEORGE KUHN

R
977.32
K955o

R
977.32
K9550

This manuscript is hereby made available for research in accordance with the conditions set forth in the Interviewee Agreement. All literary rights in the manuscript, including the right to publications, are reserved to Joliet Junior College. Persons wishing to quote any part of this manuscript must obtain written permission from the Director of the College Learning Resource Center.

INTERVIEWEE AGREEMENT

(date)

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Biographical Information.	5
Teaching in a Rural School.	6
The Tornado of 1917	8
Housekeeping on the Farm.	10
Introduction of Electricity	13
Early Washing Machines.	14
Farming in Manhattan Township	16
Early Farm Machinery.	23
Lampherers School Board	32

INTERVIEWEE: Mr. George and Mrs. Margaret Kuhn

INTERVIEWER: Kenneth Reilly

INTERVIEWER: Good afternoon. My name is Kenneth Reilly. I'm an Oral History student at Joliet Junior College. I'm at the home of Mrs. Margaret and George Kuhn on 138 Eastern Avenue, Manhattan, Illinois. Thank you very much, Mrs. Kuhn and Mr. Kuhn, for having me at your home and I appreciate it very much.

MRS. KUHN: You're entirely welcome.

REILLY: Thank you. On April 21, 1973, I had the pleasure of being one of the many guests at St. Patrick's Church in Wilton Center for the fiftieth wedding anniversary of Mrs. Margaret and George Kuhn. I've had the pleasure of knowing the Kuhn's for quite a few years before that. You see, my brother happened to be very fortunate and married their youngest daughter, Bernice. Now I'm in the home of the Kuhn's and trying to get some early history of the Manhattan area. Mrs. Kuhn, although you were not born in Manhattan Township, you lived the majority of your life there. Were you not born in the Joliet Township area?

MRS. KUHN: Yes. I was born in Joliet Township area on September 4, 1901.

REILLY: And how old were you when you moved to Manhattan?

MRS. KUHN: Almost six.

REILLY: Is there any particular circumstances that got you to move to

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2020 with funding from
Joliet Junior College Library

Manhattan?

MRS. KUHN: My grandparents lived there--my mother's parents.

REILLY: Wasn't your father killed a short time before then, too?

MRS. KUHN: Well, he died from an accident.

REILLY: And then from there you moved to Manhattan Township. Is that correct?

MRS. KUHN: Yes.

REILLY: Did your mother buy a farm in Manhattan?

MRS. KUHN: Yes.

REILLY: She didn't run it, though, did she?

MRS. KUHN: No. My uncle run it.

REILLY: Then were you educated in the Manhattan area?

MRS. KUHN: In a country school.

REILLY: And how far along did you progress in school?

MRS. KUHN: Second year high school.

REILLY: And after that what did you do?

MRS. KUHN: I taught school. Well, I worked at the bakery in Manhattan and then started teaching in the fall.

REILLY: Did you have to have any special qualifications or pass any

exams to become a schoolteacher in those days?

MRS. KUHN: Yes, we had to take a teacher's examination to get my certificate.

REILLY: To get your certificate, then after you passed that you became eligible to teach. Is that correct?

MRS. KUHN: Yes.

REILLY: Was this around 1917 or somewhere around there? I'm taking a rough guess.

MRS. KUHN: Yes.

REILLY: Whereabouts? Do you recall the area where the school was?

MRS. KUHN: Well, yes I do. Oh, it was about six miles from where I lived. I drove a horse and buggy. The name of the school was Miller School in District 58. It was located about where Cedar Road and Route 52 is today.

REILLY: You drove a horse and buggy to the school?

MRS. KUHN: Until we were married.

REILLY: Oh, my goodness. How many classes did you teach?

MRS. KUHN: All grades. I started out with 23 kids and I got down to seven. Three years in one school and one year in the second school.

REILLY: Are these schools still in existence today?

MRS. KUHN: No.

REILLY: They're obsolete.

MRS. KUHN: They're both gone.

REILLY: Did you teach all the different grades?

MRS. KUHN: All grades, yes.

REILLY: Was there a special way that you had to do this to set up the programming for each student?

MRS. KUHN: Fifth and sixth had some subjects together and so did seventh and eighth, and you alternated each year.

REILLY: Also around that time . . . I just read the article the other day in the HERALD NEWS that Manhattan was hit with a tornado. To check I think the date was in May of 1917.

MRS. KUHN: That was before I was married, though, that we went through this tornado.

REILLY: Yes, I understand. That was in 1917 if I'm not mistaken, wasn't it?

MRS. KUHN: Yes.

REILLY: And what do you recall about the tornado?

MRS. KUHN: Well, our home was really the only one livable around us at the time. My two uncles' places were destroyed and one uncle moved in with us for about three weeks and his family.

REILLY: That was on May 26, 1917, I believe. Did you actually see it?

Do you recall that day at all?

MRS. KUHN: Well, I know it was on a Saturday and my mother had just baked a big batch of bread and that was setting on the table and the windows came in and rain hit the bread, of course. There was this terrible noise that you couldn't hear anything.

REILLY: That's what I want to ask you about. They say the noise is something like a freight train. Is that what it seemed like to you?

MRS. KUHN: Oh, I think so. But you couldn't hear anything. It was just real loud.

REILLY: Was there any warning at all?

MRS. KUHN: None at that time.

REILLY: Actually they didn't have the communications to give the proper warning. Was there anyone in this particular area that was killed or hurt?

MRS. KUHN: No. My uncle got a broken arm but all his kids, they were all safe.

REILLY: What about the livestock? Was there any bad damage there or crops?

MRS. KUHN: I don't remember.

REILLY: Now, Mrs. Kuhn, you taught school up until the time you and your husband got married which was April 21, 1923. You finished out the school term that particular year and then you took up housekeeping. Is that correct?

MRS. KUHN: Yes.

REILLY: When you were first married did you live on a farm right off the bat?

MRS. KUHN: Yes.

REILLY: Was it a farm Mr. Kuhn was renting or was he working for someone?

MRS. KUHN: No, we rented it.

REILLY: Now this is getting into the kind of interesting point . . .

I don't think enough people know or realize or appreciate the work that a farm wife had to do. I know Mr. Kuhn does and I'm sure your children do, but I would like you, number one, to tell us the typical work day in the life of a farmer's wife in that particular era which electricity and things of that nature we did not enjoy.

MRS. KUHN: We didn't have it.

REILLY: There was no such thing. How did you cook breakfast--what type of stove did you have?

MRS. KUHN: Coal stove.

REILLY: Did you light the stove or did you have the children do it?

MRS. KUHN: Yes, we had to haul in the coal and the cobs to start it in the morning.

REILLY: Was that corncobs you used?

MRS. KUHN: Yes. Oh, I don't know what else. I took care of the chickens.

REILLY: What about when the children started coming along?

MRS. KUHN: Well, I still had chickens and helped milk and garden and helped in the fields.

REILLY: You did canning also?

MRS. KUHN: Yes, always.

REILLY: Did you start the canning in the fall? Was that the proper time to do it?

MRS. KUHN: Well, whenever it was ready--peaches or strawberries or canned meat, butchered. Made sausage, made soap.

REILLY: What about butter, too?

MRS. KUHN: Yes, churned.

REILLY: In other words, from the minute you got up until the time you went to bed there was something to keep you busy.

MRS. KUHN: Well, there was something to do if you wanted to do it.

REILLY: (Laughter) You had to do it. There was nobody else to do it, I imagine. You told me something interesting about when your oldest daughter Helen was born--something about the weather conditions. Could you repeat that?

MRS. KUHN: Well, she was born in February and there was a sleet

storm on that day and that was the last telephone call to the doctor that went through for, I guess, a week before the lines were fixed back again.

REILLY: So you were very fortunate that you got to the doctor there in time. Who was the doctor then?

MRS. KUHN: Brandon, Dr. Brandon.

REILLY: I'm familiar with that name. That's quite prominent.

MRS. KUHN: Of course, it was the dad.

REILLY: Wasn't his daughter Ruth coroner or something?

MRS. KUHN: Not then

REILLY: But later on she was coroner.

MRS. KUHN: Yes.

REILLY: I did know Ruth. I wanted to talk to you also about what it was like after the children were born. You had not only the children but also you still maintained your farm chores. Is that not correct?

MRS. KUHN: Yes. Well, same thing. Milking cows, taking care of chickens, and make a garden.

REILLY: How much of that did you manage to can?

MRS. KUHN: Oh, I used to aim for about 200 quarts of everything, I mean mostly fruit, not too many vegetables, meat.

REILLY: Where did you store them? Did you have a regular pantry or

in the basement?

MRS. KUHN: In the basement.

REILLY: You had a regular cellar for something like that?

MRS. KUHN: In the cellar, yes.

REILLY: I was trying to recall, I can remember in our house over on Irving Street they had a regular cellar that they used strictly for storing. It was real dark in there. We were kind of scared to go in there.

MRS. KUHN: Well, it wasn't much at that time.

REILLY: How did you manage without electricity and running water? You had a cistern with a pump in it. Is that not correct?

MRS. KUHN: Yes.

REILLY: And then you got cold water. Did you have to heat the water?

MRS. KUHN: Yes, on the stove. And kerosene lights.

REILLY: What was a Saturday bath like then?

MRS. KUHN: The tub was beside the stove.

REILLY: That was the Saturday bath. I remember something similar to that in the army.

MRS. KUHN: We had a hard coal stove for heat. Then we turned to oil.

REILLY: Now there was something about points. I don't know if this

is getting into the early 40's or not . . . but for electricity, didn't you have to get so many quality points.

MRS. KUHN: Yes, and we couldn't bring it in the house. We had to just wire the barn, but we had a good electrician.

REILLY: Oh, (Laughter) who helped things out a little. I think it's safe to say that now. Mrs. Kuhn, I would like to know a little bit more about how you did your laundry. With people working on the farm I know they must have gotten awful dirty and you must have had one heck of a time doing their laundry. Could you give me some explanations of how you did it--any problems you might have run into.

MRS. KUHN: Well, I had a washing machine with a gasoline motor on it. First we had a washing machine you had to push a wooden handle back and forth to move the washing part inside. Then we got a machine run by a gasoline motor.

REILLY: Didn't you almost get gassed from it?

MRS. KUHN: One day gas came back in the house in place of going out. I begun to get kind of dizzy and had to quit.

REILLY: Was there actually a leak in it?

MRS. KUHN: No, the fumes, the fumes from the motor. You see, we had . . . I don't think there was an outlet to it, was there? It went down the steps but it didn't go out. So I shut it off. I had to wait a while before I could go on again.

REILLY: How did you actually do your laundry? You used this gas . . .

MRS. KUHN: It turned the machine to make it work.

REILLY: Did you have to actually steam the clothes to clean them?

MRS. KUHN: Oh, you had to heat the water on the stove to get it boiling and then you pailed it into the machine. It worked just like electric only it was run by gasoline.

REILLY: What about cooking? It must have took you much longer then than it does now, say, just to prepare a Sunday meal.

MRS. KUHN: Oh, well, of course you had to use the oven and the top of the stove. We always had to heat water for the dishes on the stove or in the reservior. I suppose you know about that.

REILLY: No, not really (Laughter). I'm not too sharp on reserviors.

MRS. KUHN: That's about all I can tell you about the washing and the cooking.

REILLY: I mean, did it take you maybe an hour or so longer to prepare a meal than it would nowadays.

MRS. KUHN: Oh, yes. It took longer.

REILLY: Did you make your own bread and things of that nature?

MRS. KUHN: Yes, I made lots of bread.

REILLY: You must have spent a lot of hours in the kitchen. Is that correct?

MRS. KUHN: Yes, a lot of hours in the kitchen and clean the house a

day a week or something like that.

REILLY: Actually, on a farm what is a bigger asset? I imagine a man would want sons and a woman would just assume have daughters. Is there any truth to that?

MRS. KUHN: We were very good. We had two of each.

REILLY: It worked out quite well for you. Mrs. Kuhn, I think I'm going to give you a little rest. I think I probably talked to you and maybe even bothered you long enough. I appreciate very much the help you gave me. If you have anything else to say, please say it. You're more than welcome to. Thank you very much. Now I'm going to try to switch over and get some information about what it was like to farm the land and talk to your husband Mr. Kuhn. Thank you very much.

MRS. KUHN: You're welcome.

REILLY: Mr. Kuhn, before you came to this area I understand you were born in New Brunswick, New Jersey on December 18, 1893. I was stationed at an army base there once upon a time, but anyway, in your early childhood until you got to Manhattan can you give us a few details of what you did and what your homelife was like?

MR. KUHN: I was working on a farm with my folks . . . I went to Detroit and worked for the Dodge Brothers for a while before I came to Illinois.

REILLY: Do you recall off hand when you came to Illinois? Did you come right to Manhattan?

MR. KUHN: Yes. I came directly to Manhattan, Illinois from Detroit, Michigan in July of 1921.

REILLY: Was there a reason for it besides you knew that you'd meet Mrs. Kuhn (Laughter)?

MR. KUHN: My intentions were to go to California. So I landed in Manhattan and got a job on a farm. Then I met Margaret and I haven't gotten to California yet. I flew over it a couple of times but I've never stopped there.

REILLY: You never stopped there?

MR. KUHN: No.

REILLY: Your early days must not have been too easy. I understand that you rented farms and could you give me an idea and our audience what renting a farm was?

MR. KUHN: Yes. We rented 160 acres for \$3 an acre. And today that same land would rent for \$80 an acre.

REILLY: It was \$3 an acre. Did you pay that per month or year or what?

MR. KUHN: A year.

MRS. KUHN: It was \$3.

REILLY: Oh, my goodness. That wasn't too bad of a deal at all. Of course, in those days \$3 was a little bit more than what it would be at this particular time.

MR. KUHN: Oh, yes.

REILLY: But you have seen . . . you started out with more or less the basic tools of running a farm up until now with the ultra-modern machinery. What was it like in the early days walking hours behind a horse and plowing fields and things of that nature?

MR. KUHN: When I came to Illinois we used plows with five horses. We called it a gang plow. If you had pretty good horses you could plow about six acres a day--maybe a little better. Now they have seven, eight bottom plows and you knock off around 35 or 40 acres a day--less hours. In them days we husked corn by hand and everything. We'd go out in the morning about daylight and try to get our two loads--try to get 100 bushel a day. You had to be a pretty good picker to pick 100 bushel of corn a day.

REILLY: Did you have hired hands to help you do this?

MR. KUHN: Part time.

REILLY: Did you get it from people in this area?

MR. KUHN: Well, no, mostly high school kids that would stop in maybe after school or they'd stay home from school a couple days.

REILLY: Nowadays they used a lot of migrant workers. There was no such thing as using migrant workers?

MR. KUHN: No. Then when we farmed more land we hired a man by the month.

REILLY: Actually, farming is a subject I'm quite weak on, as you know,

but I would like to say let's take a day in the spring of the year and then go to the summer and then to the fall. Could we do that? Could you tell me what your day would be like if you were planting and you harvested in the fall. Is that correct? And whatever you may do in the summer.

MR. KUHN: Well, first thing was spring you'd be putting in . . . in those days they raised a lot of oats. You'd put the oats in first and maybe some spring wheat and then the corn crop. Then you'd be busy taking care of cultivating until the oats was ready to cut. They'd have a thrashing gang of about eight neighbors. We'd each have to furnish a team and a wagon and a rack and a hired man. Of course, they fed us pretty good. We always had a lunch in the morning and a big dinner and lunch in the afternoon. We kept the women pretty busy, too.

REILLY: I can imagine with all those people. Did you work each farm?

MR. KUHN: Yes, they'd start out at one farm and finish him up and then the next to go. One year one would be first and then it would change and the next year the other would be the first.

REILLY: Did you ever get in any arguments over that or was most of that run fairly orderly?

MR. KUHN: No, they got along pretty good.

MRS. KUHN: Until they cut out supper.

MR. KUHN: Yes, they finally cut out the supper.

REILLY: Why was that?

MR. KUHN: I guess the women got tired when they were cooking all the time. So then it made it better. You got home earlier and got your chores done. They wouldn't all finish the same time either, see. They wouldn't all quit at the same time. One rack might still be at five o'clock unloading and the next one might be six o'clock. See, there was eight racks--bundle wagons to cover. Some of them get pretty late sometimes so they cut out the supper and it made it nicer to go home.

REILLY: You must have had some good years and some bad years. Let's see if you can remember some of the good years. I know you can not compare the crops they have nowadays, the chemicals and the different things, the equipment and everything, but in those days you must have had some banner years and some records in their own right.

MR. KUHN: Well, we only had one really bad year. Drought, chinch bugs pretty near cleaned us out. It so happened that things turned out pretty good. It cut the surplus way down and then the prices went up and a quite a few years after that until they caught up again some.

REILLY: Even a bad event does have its good side.

MR. KUHN: Yes.

REILLY: What about the chinch bug? I know you might be a little hazy in the year, but from what I heard it was somewhere around 1933.

MR. KUHN: Yes, I guess it was. Yes, right in there.

REILLY: Do you remember how it happened and what was tried or done to prevent it?

MR. KUHN: The chinch bug would only do good in real dry air. If you get a good shower of rain They start in the weeds. You get a good shower of rain and the chinch bugs just won't hatch out like the dry year. Ever since that we never bothered with them too much. They cut out the weeds for a few years and barley. We haven't been bothered with bugs or chinch bugs that amount to anything since then.

REILLY: I want to get back to these chinch bugs. Because of the drought, they had an excessive amount of them. Is that correct?

MR. KUHN: Yes.

REILLY: And then they completely destroyed the crops. Is that reasonably correct?

MR. KUHN: Not completely, but it was awful close. It was awful close to it. You'd go out with a team and wagon and husk corn. You wouldn't have to unload at noon. You could take the same wagon right back and then unload at night and then you wouldn't have a load.

REILLY: Now did this happen to all the farms in this particular area?

MR. KUHN: Yes.

REILLY: Was it in all of Illinois?

MR. KUHN: I don't know how far it went out, but it did get Green Garden Township, Manhattan, and Wilton Center and around there it happened.

REILLY: Was anything done to get rid of them? How did they dissipate?

MR. KUHN: We tried everything. We plowed furrows and they came out of

the weeds and would get over to the corn, see. We plow furrows and then drag a post through it and make the dust and put the Chrisode in and a post dug and we dig a hole every so often and they fall down into this hole and you'd burn them out. We got rid of some of them, but some of them got over it. They got by it.

REILLY: Mr. Kuhn, where did you get the idea to fight these things, these insects, and try to kill them?

MR. KUHN: There was a fellow working out there. He was a hired man for a neighbor and he farmed and he worked in Kansas. He said that's the way they tried to fight them out there. That's where we got the idea from--how to handle them. But we rented this farm when the neighbors came over and he told the landlord. He said, "George is just wasting his time out there. He might as well stay in bed." Well, the landlord told him, "Well, at least he's trying." We tried and we got a little crop--enough for feed anyway to keep the livestock and enough for the winter anyways until the next year.

REILLY: But you were hurting pretty bad that particular year?

MR. KUHN: Yes.

REILLY: Did cold weather settle in? Did that kill these insects?

MR. KUHN: They disappeared anyway. There was a few after that once in a while but not enough to hurt a person. Like I said, we get a good rain every so often--a good shower or rain. They just didn't hatch out.

REILLY: How big were they? Were they the size of an ant or bigger?

MR. KUHN: Oh, a little bit bigger than an ant. Maybe twice as big I would say. It's been so long I don't just remember. I haven't seen them in the last 15, 20 years. I haven't seen a chinch around.

REILLY: I can imagine you don't care to see them (Laughter). It wouldn't bother you at all if you never see another one.

MR. KUHN: But they haven't bothered us lately at all.

REILLY: Was there any other years that were bad ones due to storms or any other memorable years that you can recall?

MR. KUHN: No, we've been having Oh, we had a little with the hail a few times but not too bad--nothing like that one year. We always got a pretty fair crop. Of course, some years was better than others, you know.

REILLY: Well, this area is really known for its rich soil. Is that not true?

MR. KUHN: Yes, around Manhattan, Wilton and some of Joliet has good land, too. It is good farming country.

REILLY: Let's talk a little bit about, you mentioned it earlier, but let's talk a little bit more in detail. I'm going to let you talk a little more in detail about the machinery. What tools you had to work with at first and then how it progressed until the modern machinery we have today. We won't go into the modern, but just tell what you had to work with back in the twenties and thirties.

MR. KUHN: Like we used to have to go out and cut the oats and the wheat

with the binder and then go out and shock it and the crew would come in and thrash it and then the combines come out. That done away with all that work and you didn't have to go all through that again. Then the same way when we used to shell corn we'd get about eight or nine neighbors and hull corn. They would come in with a team and wagon and haul the corn to the elevator. We would change help, you know. Like if you got a lot of them to shell in the wintertime and then the ones that didn't get shelled in the wintertime, then like after you got your corn in you'd have a few days and be on the road with the team or maybe two teams and haul corn with the neighbors and maybe yourself.

REILLY: What about the livestock? What type of livestock did you carry on the farm?

MR. KUHN: Well, we dairied for a while--not big, but 10 or 12 cows and then we quit that and we went into feeding cattle. We fed some cattle and we kept about four or five brewd sows. We raised some pigs. That's gone quite a bit anymore. There are big feeders around now that feed a couple hundred or 300 head of cattle. So that froze the little fellow out.

REILLY: It doesn't pay to do that on a small-time basis.

MR. KUHN: No.

REILLY: What about the . . . I think it would be interesting. In those days how did you butcher your cattle and take care of them?

MR. KUHN: Well, in the early days three or four neighbors would get together. They'd come like to our place and one day we'd butcher the

pigs and maybe a calf. Next day you'd come along and cut up the beef and rendered the lard and make the summer sausage. Get the ham and shoulders ready. We'd smoke the bacon and the ham and the shoulders. We had a smokehouse. We'd smoke our own meat.

REILLY: How about storage for your own meat? What did you do for storage?

MR. KUHN: You'd just wrap it in a sack and hang it up. It would keep pretty well all summer. Then my wife she'd fry some down and put it in a jar and put some lard over it and keep it that way.

REILLY: Who taught you or how did you learn how to butcher a cow?

MR. KUHN: With the neighbors. In them days I was one of the younger guys and these older fellows they'd been in the business. They knew just how to do it, see. Certain guys would fry off the lard. You'd have a big butchering kettle out there and he'd fry off the lard. That was his job. He was supposed to know how to do that and he did. Then we'd all chip in and cut the hams and shoulders and the bacon. Well, I knew a little something about it, too. I worked for Anhauser Co. one year and drove a beef truck. In them days they had butcher shops and it was in the butcher shops I could see how they were cutting.

REILLY: That would be a good education.

MR. KUHN: Yes. I got on to it pretty good.

REILLY: With four children active and well educated and doing quite well on their own, what was it like raising them on a farm? And I'm

going to ask you, Mrs. Kuhn, about the schooling--where they went to school. I know they had a distance to go. What was the program more or less?

MRS. KUHN: Well, they had two miles to go to school. We used to bring them quite often and a lot of times they walked. There was all grades, I mean, in the school.

REILLY: Did they go to Peotone, was it?

MRS. KUHN: No, it was a country school, the same as I had until they got into high school. Then they went to Peotone on the bus.

REILLY: Did Bernice go to Peotone and then from there went on to nurse's training?

MRS. KUHN: Yes.

REILLY: And Helen?

MRS. KUHN: Helen went to Peotone for four years--Bud, Bob, Bernice.

REILLY: And then your main thing was . . . what about the activities, social activities?

MRS. KUHN: Helen worked at the drug store here in town til she went to Public Service two or three years clerking in there. Bud . . . what did Bud do after he got out of high school?

MR. KUHN: He worked for International in Chicago.

MRS. KUHN: Oh yes, for a couple of years.

MR. KUHN: But then they had a hall. There's still a hall up on Center and they run a dance there maybe every two or three weeks, see, about once a month maybe and we'd go there.

REILLY: If I'm not mistaken, they used to have a pretty fair softball, baseball team around there because I think I came up here to play.

MRS. KUHN: I don't remember our kids playing baseball.

MR. KUHN: No, our kids didn't.

REILLY: I think it was your nephew, Pete . . . had a baseball team. I remember one kid. His name was Reilly and I think they called him "Jughead" Reilly. He was a good athlete.

MR. KUHN: Yes, he was an announcer, too.

REILLY: We played some football and things of that nature. But they did have plenty of activities to keep them busy plus, I imagine, you managed to keep them very busy on the farm. They had certain chores they had to do?

MRS. KUHN: Oh, yes, they had chores.

MR. KUHN: When they came home from school they had their chores to do. Whereas the boys started pretty early working out in the fields.

MRS. KUHN: For the farmers, too.

MR. KUHN: Naturally, when they got big enough they went out and worked part time on farms, too, through the summer once in a while.

REILLY: It seemed like Bob was going to take it up at one time.

Didn't Bob take to farming?

MR. KUHN: Yes, he was kind of interested in farming. He still is but he has a pretty good job now.

REILLY: I thought he seemed a little bit more interested than Bud was.

MR. KUHN: Yes, Bud never was too interested in farming. He always wanted to do something else. Bud's got his job now. He's been there for 20 years or better. I think he's going to try to stick it out.

REILLY: I don't blame him. I was wondering now, you were telling me back in the rougher days what did you use for lights? Was it kerosene lanterns for the home?

MR. KUHN: Kerosene lamps.

MRS. KUHN: Gas. We had a gas light with mantels on it. They were very fragile.

REILLY: And you could turn them and to some degree they'd get a little brighter?

MR. KUHN: Yes. They didn't make much of a light. The kerosene lamps, you had to fill them every day with kerosene and wash the chimney.

REILLY: When you had the milking cows you would get up to go and milk them and feed the chickens before you made breakfast. Was it something like that? Is that what you did?

MR. KUHN: Feeding the chickens was her job and she'd help me milk the cows a lot of times when the kids were too small. You'd have six or seven or eight horses to get ready, too, and clean the barns and everything before breakfast.

MRS. KUHN: We had a milking machine before the last.

MR. KUHN: Then we got the milking machine and that cut a little of the work out.

REILLY: That must have been a great asset.

MR. KUHN: Yes.

REILLY: I wanted to ask you, when you harvested your products, your wheat and grain, what did you do after that? Where did you take them to the market? How did you get them to the market? Things of that nature, your corn and wheat.

MR. KUHN: We hauled it with horses.

REILLY: Did you have a place, a center, here in town?

MR. KUHN: Yes, there were quite a few around. Two or three in Manhattan. Wilton had an elevator and Andrews elevators was all the elevators.

REILLY: Was there an advantage in taking them to any one in particular or it didn't make any difference?

MRS. KUHN: The closest one.

MR. KUHN: In those days the closest one. They were pretty well all about the same. Farmers owned one, Andrews and Wilton, and we all had shares in it. If they made any money, we got a dividend.

REILLY: How many of you were in on it? Say, a group of 20 farmers?

MR. KUHN: Oh, no, it would be over 200. I don't know just how many, but there was a lot of them.

REILLY: In this particular area about how many farms are there?

MR. KUHN: Right now?

REILLY: Yes.

MR. KUHN: It used to be 160 or 200 acres would be about the average farm. Now a man if he don't farm 1000 acres, he might as well go out of business.

REILLY: You have to have that much to really keep going?

MR. KUHN: Yes, because with this big machinery and high-priced machinery you got to farm a lot of land to make a go of it. Of course, they can get over a lot of work in a day, too.

REILLY: If you had it to do all over again, Mr. Kuhn, would you come to Manhattan and do the work you did?

MR. KUHN: Yes, I would.

REILLY: You have no regrets?

MR. KUHN: No. No regrets at all.

REILLY: I knew the answer to that question before I asked it. I felt quite certain of that.

MR. KUHN: I like it around here. It's a lot easier farming here than it is in the east because most of it's beets and potatoes and that's all the heavy work. It's a lot harder work than it is around here.

REILLY: I had a feeling when you were a younger man in Detroit and you came here that your intentions of going to California. . . Do you ever have any hindsight about not going on?

MR. KUHN: No. It's like I said. We flew over it a couple times and then went to Hawaii. That's as close as I got. We didn't get down on the ground, though.

REILLY: The same way, I lived in Arizona and I never made it to California. I was on an airplane one day and we were going to go to California but the darn thing didn't get off the ground. I'm glad all the trouble was on the ground instead of up in the air. What about you, Mrs. Kuhn? Have you any regrets? Do you wish you would have been Let's put it this way. Would you rather be in the city the size of Joliet or bigger or would you prefer a more rural or slower paced life like in Manhattan.

MRS. KUHN: No, this is big enough for me.

REILLY: I have this feeling. I've lived in Joliet all my life. This might be a little bit nicer. I think I've had all of Joliet I want. I'd rather have something a little bit smaller. You and Mr. Kuhn

have done a terrific job, I might say. You have my great respect for what you have accomplished. The hardships which I can only imagine because I never experienced them must have been tremendous. I can see it doesn't both you too much at all. I really think you've worked as a team and a pretty darn good team.

MRS. KUHN: Yes, we still work as a team sometimes.

REILLY: I think most of the time. I want to thank you very much for allowing me in your home.

MR. KUHN: I'm glad you came in.

REILLY: I really enjoyed it. I'm sure it will turn out all right and I'm very happy. Thank you very much. Mrs. Kuhn, I almost forgot to ask you two questions pertaining to you and your children. Number one, were you not at one time a member of a school board? And what were your duties?

MRS. KUHN: In those days we were called school directors. I believe it was from 1937 to 1943. There were three members on the school board. The duties of the school director were to hire the teachers, decide on the wages per month, and settle any difficulties that come up pertaining to the school.

REILLY: What was the name of this school and is it still in operation?

MRS. KUHN: Lampherers School, District 58. It was in Wilton Township.

REILLY: One last question. Did you children attend this school?

MRS. KUHN: Yes, all of them.

REILLY: Thanks again to you and Mr. Kuhn for being so kind.

MRS. KUHN: You're welcome.

INDEX

Anhauser Co., 25

Brandon, Dr., 12

canning, 12-13

chinch bugs, 20-23

Detroit, Mich., 16-17

drought, 20

grain elevators, 29-30

kerosene lamps, 13, 28

Kuhn, Bernice, 5, 26

Kuhn, Bob, 26

Kuhn, Bud, 26

Kuhn, Helen, 11, 26

Lampheres School, 32

livestock, 24

Miller School, 7

plow, 18

schooling, 26

school board, 32

threshing gang, 20

tornado of 1917, 8-9

Wilton Center, 5

